

God is For Us

1 Tim. 1:15-17 (selected passages)

Series” Here”

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We are celebrating the arrival of Jesus into the world with this series, Here, and we are exploring three central truths. Last week, we talked in detail about the mystery and miracle of the incarnation, and we outlined what it meant that God is WITH US.

The title and subject matter of today’s message is: **God is For Us**

And this is all about salvation. Paul writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1 is recounting his testimony. How he was once a (v. 14) “blasphemer, persecutor and insolent opponent” of the Church. But then he writes of the overwhelming love of God and the grace that was poured out over and, in his life, and he makes this statement:

1 Tim. 1:15 – “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost.”

This verse tells us the MAJOR reason Jesus came to earth. If you want to know WHY there is a Christmas – it’s this right here. Paul tells us right here – He came into the world to save sinners!

We read of this purpose even in the name that he is given. The angel in announcing the birth of the Christ child said to Joseph in:

Matt. 1:21 – “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Jesus describing his earthly ministry in: **Luke 19:10 – “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”**

The salvation of mankind was the preeminent purpose behind Jesus coming into the world. And his salvation shows us once and for all that God is FOR us!

You know sometimes we fail to remember or fully believe this important truth – that God is FOR us.

In fact, if you narrow much of the biblical counseling our offices do here at the church to a singular topic and what you will find is we simply take the issue the person is dealing with and try to show them through scripture God is FOR them.

THAT is a hard truth to understand and really believe in WHEN you’re going through it!

Illus. The Always God – This is one of the reasons I wrote my book, *The Always God*. The subtitle is, “He Hasn’t Changed and You’re Not Forgotten”.

I wrote it during Covid. And as you recall, people were getting sick and dying. The weekend I was to preach here in “View of a Call” – 5 years ago yesterday, I remember getting the text that morning that one of my mentors had died.

You had people not able to be with loved ones in hospitals and nursing facilities. You had people losing their jobs...students were drowning in anxiety and there were all sorts of economic uncertainty. And the Lord just placed this book on my heart to remind people that he's the same God he's always been and that YOU – whatever situation you are in, have not been forgotten!

But, this is what we think sometimes isn't it? We go through a difficulty...a hardship...a trial of some kind and we think that God has forgotten us OR that he is mad at us OR that he simply doesn't care about us – this is what the people of Israel thought before Jesus came.

From Malachi to Matthew represents 400 years of silence! There was no prophetic voice of God to the people of Israel. Just to put that in perspective – 400 years ago (1620) the Mayflower had just landed at Plymouth Rock...that's a long time!

NO word from the Lord for 400 years! Add to that they are under Roman occupation and oppression – they're might have been a few faithful still trusting the Lord (he ALWAYS has his remnant) but the mass majority – you better believe they were thinking:

- God has forgotten about me...
- God is mad at me...
- God doesn't care about me...

And then: **Gal. 4:4-5a** – “**But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law...**”

The single fact that Jesus left heaven and came to earth (incarnation – to be WITH US) ...and he came to bring salvation TO us...redeem us...proves once and forever that God is FOR us!

Listen to your pastor today: WHATEVER it is you are going through IF you are “in Christ” ...IF you are a son or daughter of God, listen to me!

- God has NOT forgotten you...
- God is NOT mad at you...
- God DOES care for you...

There are two primary ways in scripture we can KNOW God is for us. First, is: **His Work**

We already read that Christ came into the world to SAVE sinners...that he came to “seek and save the lost” – SAVING is what God does best!

When the angels broke through the midnight sky announcing the birth of Jesus to those shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, do you remember their words?

Luke 2:10-11 – “**And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”**

SAVING is WHY Jesus came...it's what he does best, AND it's what we needed the most. I'm reminded of the quote...don't know who originated it that says:

“If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.”

“Saving” is the WORK God accomplishes on our behalf, but to FULLY appreciate this WORK is to understand HOW it is accomplished WHY it had to happen in the first place.

Illus. Christmas Spectacular – I LOVE as a church that we get to put on The Christmas Spectacular. I think sharing the sights and sounds of Christmas in a BIG way and sharing the true message via the arts and music is wonderful. And what we keep a priority is at the very end of the show, I have the privilege of sharing the gospel in a plain and as simple way as I can – and I have to in about 5 minutes explain the “how” and the “why” behind Christmas.

And here is how I say, it? I talk about the gift of Jesus – that he is the greatest gift God has ever given...and the power of the gift wrapped up in his name – “he will save the people from their sins”.

And here is what I say: See, SIN is THE issue. (Share Christmas Spectacular gospel presentation).

See, it is the work of Christ on the cross – it’s why he said right before breathing his last, “It is finished” – the sin payment was paid in full...Jesus in his death appeased the just wrath of God, and in his resurrection showed the world that God had accepted the sacrifice of his life.

- His WORK – that he took the initiative to leave heaven and come to earth...
- His WORK – that he voluntarily went to the cross and laid his life down...
- His WORK – raising to life and now seated at the right hand of the throne of God...
- His WORK – right now (Rom. 8:34) that he is interceding before God, the Father on our behalf...

THIS proves he is FOR US – but it’s not just his WORK that shows us this, it’s also seen in: **His Words**
Read the scriptures...if you have a “red letter edition”, read the words of Jesus. His words – i.e., his teaching shows over and over again that he is FOR US.

Do you remember the conversation he had with Nicodemus one evening? Nicodemus, the learned Pharisee comes to him in the middle of the night to ask him about his teachings, and Jesus shares with Nicodemus how he can be born again.

Listen to the words of Jesus – **John 3:16-17** – “**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** ¹⁷ **For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.**”

So often we think Jesus is against us...that he is some cosmic “killjoy” – but that’s NOT who Jesus is. He didn’t come to pile on the guilt, he came to free us from it! The scripture says here he came to “save, not condemn.”

See, this is the problem with religion – it condemns, it doesn’t save! Religion is what Nicodemus had...it’s what Paul had...and they had it in spades!

- They had what they used as scripture memorized...
- They were educated in the finest of the religious institutions...
- They both kept the Law to the tee...

Paul at one point of his life bragged about his religious pedigree and upbringing.

Phil. 3:4-6 – “though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”

In other words, he is writing, “I had everything going for me and did everything right! From the right side of the tracks...educated in the right places...had the right religious background. If there was a “Heisman Award” for being a Jewish Pharisee, Paul would have got it!

But then he also admits in the 1 Tim. 1 passage that we looked at in (v. 13b) he had acted “ignorantly in unbelief”. His religion didn’t save him, it condemned him!

Nicodemus is coming to Jesus in the middle of the night because his religion is not doing it for him either...it’s not filling him up...it’s not answering the toughest and weightiest questions of the soul.

Religion ALWAYS condemns. Religion says:

- You’ve got to be a good person to have a right standing with God...
- You’ve got to obey all the rules in order for your sins to be forgiven...
- You’ve got to DO SOMETHING to be saved...

This is what religion says...and this is what condemns because it’s impossible for the good to outweigh the bad - whose scales is the measurement coming off of?! There’s NO WAY we could keep all the rules and laws...what could we possibly “DO” that could save us?

A: NOTHING! To even try to do something to save ourselves is the very definition of religion, and we will be condemned in our trying every time.

THIS is why Jesus came - NOT to condemn, but to save. Listen closely to WHO can be saved.

John 3:16 (again) - “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Jesus is FOR “whoever believes” – that whoever means me...it means you! The message of Christmas again...delivered from the angel to those shepherds all those years ago:

Luke 2:10 – “And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

1 Tim. 2:4 – “who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Salvation is for ALL people...for the “whoever’s” of the world!

- It doesn't matter your background...
- It doesn't matter your past mistakes...
- It doesn't matter your economic status...
- It doesn't matter your skin color...
- It doesn't matter how successful you are or if you're the biggest loser in town...

Jesus came FOR you because he is FOR you! We see it in his work (his life, his death, his resurrection) and we see it in his words!

Time and again, we see Jesus in the gospels showing that he is FOR ALL people.

I think of the woman at the well...she's sleeping around...living with someone that is not her husband...she's caught in the very act of adultery – this is John 8 – Jesus doesn't condemn her. He confronts her in her sin, but he also shows her grace and sets her free from the condemnation of the religious leaders that set her up!

I think of Matthew and Zaccheus, the tax collectors...they were hated...despised. There was no one further down on society's ladder than a tax collector. They were working with the Roman government, cheating their own people (The Jewish people) out of their money – and yet Jesus makes one of them one of his disciples and the other he dines with and it's where he made the statement:

Luke 19:10 – “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Or what about the thief on the cross?! Here's a man that is a convicted felon – he is as guilty as it comes...he's being crucified for his crime. There is NOTHING he could offer Jesus...NOTHING he could do for Jesus. He was rightly getting what he deserved – and yet EVEN as Jesus is dying, he doesn't condemn, he says, “Today, you will be with me in Paradise.”

Listen: Jesus didn't come to condemn! It was the sinners and those who were lost that felt comfortable around him. And they felt comfortable NOT because he embraced OR agreed OR affirmed their lifestyle and choices! They felt comfortable around him because they didn't feel condemned.

In fact, they felt the opposite – LOVE. And Jesus showed in his WORK and in his WORDS – “I AM FOR YOU!”

Hear this, this morning. YOU...I'm speaking in the emphatic – if YOU are hearing my voice right now either live or online, YOU are a “whosoever” ...you represent a “FOR ALL THE PEOPLE” that Christ came to save.

Mark it down – he is FOR you! Religion condemns. Jesus doesn't! He saves! The Enemy, our adversary – he condemns. It's why he is called the “Accuser of the Brethren” (Rev. 12:10).

Most of the shame we experience...the guilt cycle we can't get out of is because we are listening to the voice of the Enemy bring our past sins against us...and all he wants to do is keep us in a cycle of shame and guilt (like a wash cycle) so that we can't worship and serve Jesus freely. And in listening to the Enemy, he robs us of joy.

I mean, come on...Christmas and joy are synonymous...and yet there are some here not experience the joy of following Jesus and knowing Jesus because you are listening to the accuser – and do you want to know what listening to his voice brings?

Condemnation. But what does the Bible teach? For those of us that know Christ – it's:

Rom. 8:1 – “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Jesus by His Holy Spirit brings conviction, but NOT condemnation. Jesus is FOR you...are you hearing this? Jesus is God's greatest gift in showing once and for all this truth – “God is for us”.

So, here's the challenge today.

1. Receive the gift

A gift by definition must be received. Salvation is a gift and it must like any physical gift you are given at Christmas...it must be received. Receiving is MORE than acknowledging...it's MORE than admiring...it is taking it!

Illus. \$20.00 – it must be received!

**John 1:12-13 – “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,
13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”**

This is a personal gift with your name on it...I don't care how old you get, you like hearing your name when it's called...you've got a gift...it's the gift of salvation – God is FOR us.

2. Enjoy the gift

Salvation is meant to be enjoyed...and you will never enjoy it when you are living for the world. We mentioned Christmas and joy going hand in hand. You want to know what will kill your joy and keep you from enjoying this gift of salvation?

Living for the world...comparing yourself and what you have or don't have to the rest of the world...trying to find life and meaning and purpose with the things of this world – i.e. power and money and earthly relationships – that will still your joy and not enable or allow you to enjoy the greatest gift God has ever given.

Instead, we are to enjoy salvation...to enjoy our relationship with him.

Look, what brings me joy when I give my children gifts? It's NOT for them to set it aside and never do anything with it...it's when they use it...when they were little, it's when they played with whatever gift I gave them. It brought me joy knowing that they were enjoying the gift I gave them.

Well, in the same way, don't you know it brings God, our Father great joy when we enjoy the gift of salvation...and by enjoying it that means we walk in fellowship with the Lord. We spend time with him...we have a heart of gratitude and thanksgiving for what he has done for us, and we show this in the obedience we willingly offer him – that's enjoying the gift of salvation – worshiping him...sitting BEFORE him because we know “in Christ” he is FOR us.

3. Regift the gift

You know what regifting is, don't you?! Come on, ALL of us have done it! It's when you get a gift that you don't necessarily want OR need OR won't use and you regift it to someone else – it's a cheap way out!

Well, with salvation – knowing that “God is FOR us” – this is a gift that is TOO good to keep to ourselves! Regifting this gift is EXACTLY what God wants us to do. He wants us to share it with as many people as possible!

The world needs to hear about this gift of salvation – that “in Christ” ...as shown in his WORK and has taught in his WORDS, God is FOR US.

And we're going to talk about sharing this message next week as we conclude this *Here* series with a message about: GOD IN US – it's all about the mission he gives us.

Will you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.